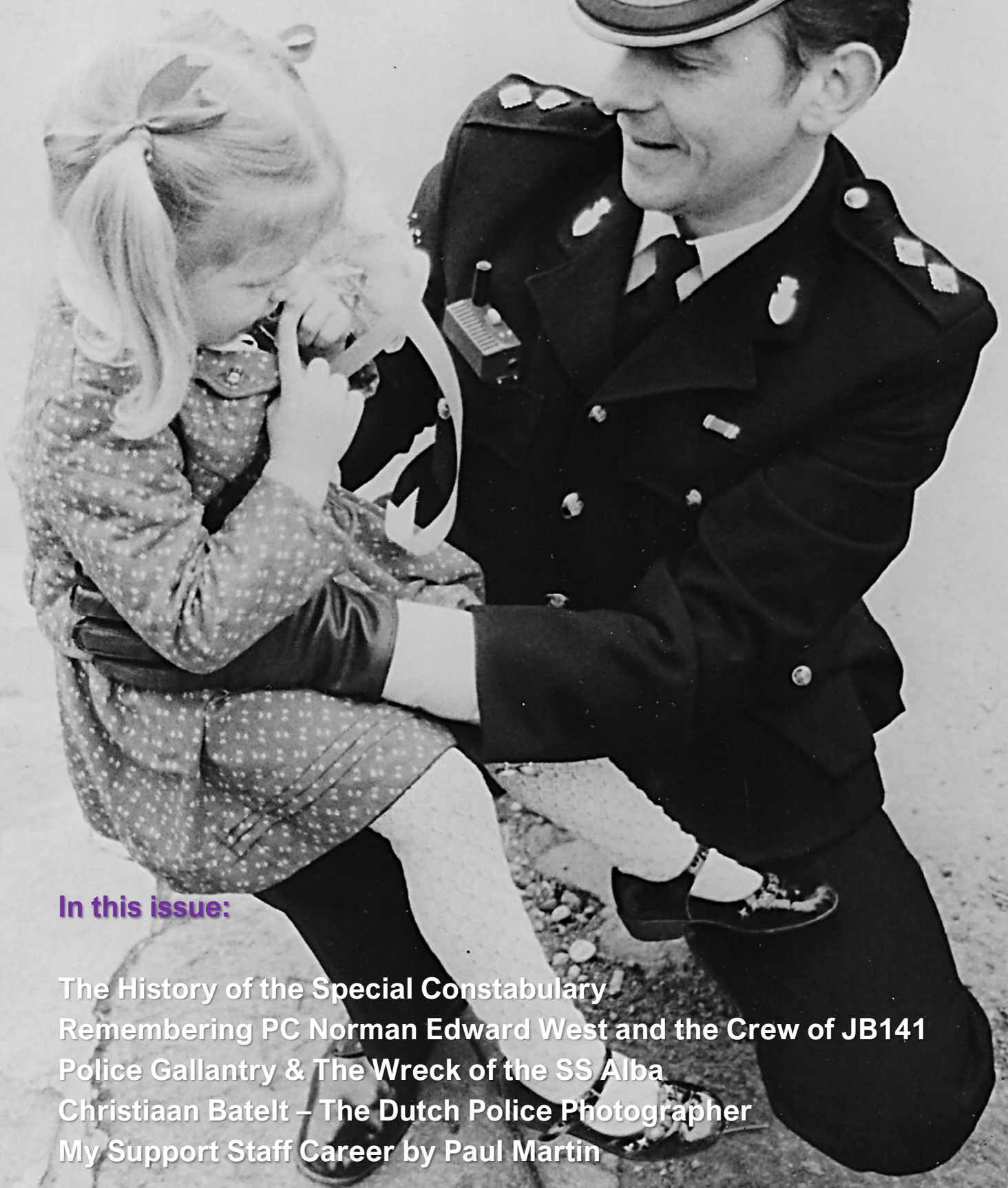


# History Matters

The Devon & Cornwall Police History Magazine

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## In this issue:

The History of the Special Constabulary  
Remembering PC Norman Edward West and the Crew of JB141  
Police Gallantry & The Wreck of the SS Alba  
Christiaan Batelt – The Dutch Police Photographer  
My Support Staff Career by Paul Martin

**Welcome** to the thirty-third issue of 'History Matters – The Devon & Cornwall Police History Magazine'. This month we have a potted history of Britain's oldest police force – the special constabulary, from its inception under King Charles II to its modern equivalent, taking in both national and local developments. Thanks to Antony West and Richard Gibson, we also have a tribute to the memory of PC Norman Edward West who tragically lost his life whilst serving in the RAF during the Second World War. Finally, retired D&C police staff Paul Martin has provided a comprehensive and fascinating account of his career with the force in Torquay from 1989 to 2020. As always, guest articles for future issues are welcome. If you have something in mind, please get in touch.

**56658 Mark Rothwell**

## Contents

**03** The History of the Special Constabulary

**12** Remembering PC Norman Edward West and the Crew of JB141

**15** Police Gallantry & The Wreck of the SS Alba

**17** Christiaan Batelt – The Dutch Police Photographer

**19** GPO Investigations

...and more...

## For Mike

**Front cover image:** Inspector Derek Roper from Tavistock in the 1980s. (*Simon Dell Collection*)

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# The History of the Special Constabulary



Est. 1673

**In the present day, the special constabulary provides an important voluntary service to the regular police force, the value of which cannot be understated. How did a system for appointing volunteer police officers come about? Read on...**

In the year 1673, King Charles II of England passed a law which permitted the appointment of constables from the population during times of riotous disorder. The ruling was originally intended as a means to enforce new religious laws during the tumultuous 'Cavalier Years' of King Charles II's reign.

To distinguish the volunteer constables from the elected parish constables, they were known as 'special' constables, and thus the term 'special constabulary' came into general use. Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, special constables were appointed during countless instances of civil unrest and were often all that stood between peace and lawlessness.



King Charles II of England. The brainchild of the special constabulary.

The earliest special constables had no specific code of conduct; they were usually hastily sworn in following a call for volunteers in response to an emergency situation and could only act within the parish they were appointed. After taking the oath of office before a justice of the peace, they were issued with batons. It was common to issue a badge of office such as white armband, however both the issue of weapons and identifying marks was entirely down to the area, the severity of the emergency, and any possible time constraints.

In 1820, an Act of Parliament was passed which clarified which situations they could be called upon and increased the powers of magistrates to appoint special constables. The law was passed following the Manchester Riots of 1819 (aka 'The Peterloo Massacre') during which a special constable was killed.



One of the many depictions of the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, when a crowd of 60,000 which had gathered to demand Parliamentary reform was charged by cavalrymen. Eighteen people, including a special constable, were killed.

### Notable Special Constables

**Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte.** The future Emperor Napoleon III of France was one of 170,000 special constables sworn in during a Chartist demonstration on Kennington Common, London, on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1848.

**Sir Robert Peel.** Commonly known as one of Britain's most influential Prime Ministers (1834-1835 & 1841-1846) and the creator of the Metropolitan Police in London, Peel was one of the 170,000 special constables present at Kennington Common during the Chartist disturbance of 1848. Also sworn in was future prime minister **William Gladstone**, who was at the time a Whig backbencher.

**Charles Dickens.** The creator of some of the most important literary works in history was, for one night only, sworn as a special constable at Liverpool Borough Police in 1860. The experience was part of his research for 'The Uncommercial Traveller', a journalistic work which was published in the magazine 'All the Year Round'.

**Isambard Kingdom Brunel.** The great civil engineer and builder was sworn in as a special constable during the Bristol Riots of 1831. He was in the area at the time overseeing the construction of the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

**Nigel Mansell.** The Formula 1 driver was sworn as a special constable at Devon & Cornwall Police in the 1990s. His appointment generated significant public interest in the special constabulary which led to an increase in applications for the role in the southwest. Mansell had previously served as a special constable in the Isle of Man Constabulary.

**Penny Lancaster.** TV personality Penny enrolled as a special constable with the City of London Police in early 2021.

**Basil Brown.** The self-taught archaeologist and astronomer who discovered the Sutton Hoo Treasure in Suffolk in 1938. His life was the subject of the 2021 film *The Dig*.

In 1831, the first major Act of Parliament in respect of the constitutional framework of the special constabulary came about. The Act codified the responsibilities of special constables, set terms of reference for expense claims, and laid down that they may be appointed during times of “tumult, riot, and felony” by at least two justices of the peace. The Act also stipulated that a person may only serve as a special constable for three calendar months at a time, long enough for a special constable to receive elementary training in police work from experienced constables in the regular full-time constabularies from 1836 onwards (when the ‘new’ police were established in the home counties). Moreover, the law allowed parishes which suffered deficiencies in local police arrangements to swear in special constables annually. The system in the parishes was based upon the yearly tradition of appointing parish constables, and placed a civic duty on the population to appear when called upon to be sworn in. To failure to do so was punishable by a fine of up to £5.

In 1835, a new Act of Parliament made alterations to the Act of 1831, specifically the removal of geographical restrictions on where a special constable could apply his powers once sworn in. Thereafter, a special constable’s jurisdiction extended to the whole county within which he was appointed.

### *The Fenian Uprising*

In 1867, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a forerunner of the IRA, also known as the ‘Fenians’, launched a violent campaign against political targets in England in an attempt to hasten Irish independence from the United Kingdom. Local authorities were deeply concerned about the ability to prevent and respond to Fenian attacks; the British Army would not immediately be available, so they looked to the special constabulary to help. At the time, the numbers of special constables in many English towns was very small and typically the force consisted of handfuls of men sworn in

every year to make up for shortfalls in the regular police. Over the course of 1868, numbers of special constables increased significantly as parishes combed their communities for eligible volunteers. In Exeter, the churchwardens of the twenty-two parishes of the city were tasked with enrolling ten special constables for each parish, amounting to a force of 220 officers. Support for the movement was significant, with the parish of Holy Trinity offering up 107 men. One, and in some parishes two, men sworn as special constables were selected to act as senior constables to the remainder in their parish to better co-ordinate the response to emergency situations.<sup>1</sup>

### *Special Constables as Reserves*

The effects of the Fenian situation on the maintenance of a large and effective special constabulary were significant, and in 1882, the practice of swearing in specials ‘just in case’ was written into law. Section 196 of the *Municipal Corporations Act 1882* laid down that towns defined as ‘municipal boroughs’ were required to swear in special constables every October. In Devon, this meant the boroughs of Barnstaple, Bideford, Dartmouth, Devonport, Exeter, Honiton, Plymouth, South Molton, Tiverton, Torrington, and Totnes. In Cornwall, this affected Bodmin, Falmouth, Helston, Launceston, Liskeard, Penryn, Penzance, St Ives, and Truro. Specials appointed under these terms were typically men of property and were legally bound to appear before the magistrates if called upon to be sworn in. Men who refused to do their civic duty could be fined up to £5. Remuneration for special constables varied between towns, and typically entailed a daily rate for every tour of duty performed. Men called upon to be sworn in as special constables could appeal the decision, usually on health grounds. In 1900, a Mr J. Carnochan appeared at Dartmouth Borough Court, as he was duty bound to do so, and claimed an exemption on the basis he was missing several ribs and half a lung. The magistrates agreed not to place the burden of special constableness upon him and endorsed an exemption. The going rate in

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Special Constables’ Exeter & Plymouth Gazette 10 January 1868, p9, col.5

Dartmouth for the call-out of a special constable in 1900 was £3 6s. per day.<sup>2</sup>

### *Specials in the Workhouses*

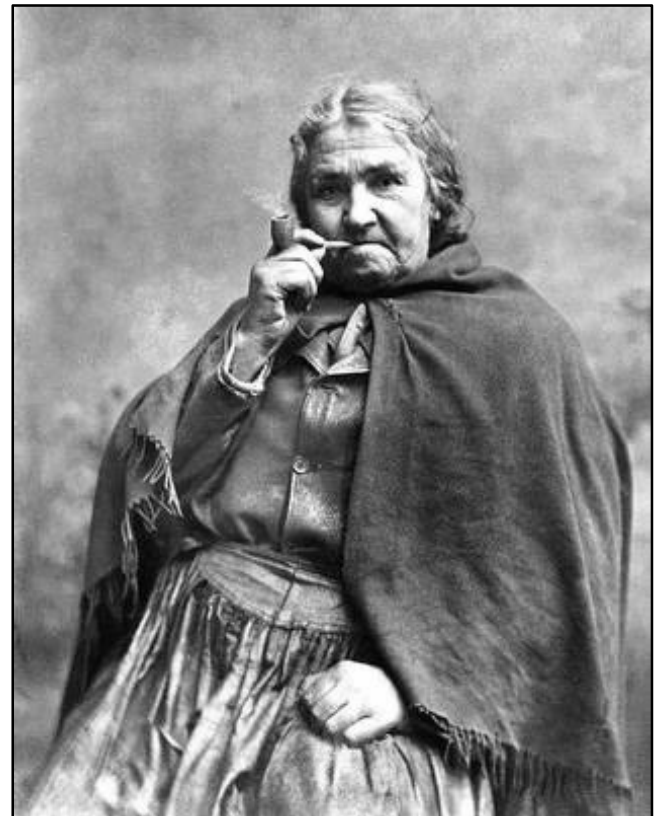
Poor Law Unions, which administered the workhouses in the parishes across the length and breadth of the land, took to appointing some of the workhouse staff as special constables to act in times of emergency in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were sometimes civil disturbances in or around the workhouses, and the presence of ordinary porters who were also special constables who could step up at short notice was no doubt advantageous. Poor Law Unions were overseen by Boards of Guardians which consisted partly of local magistrates, therefore the swearing in of special constables for the workhouses was perfectly within the capabilities of the board. Known examples include:

- Two workhouse staff sworn as special constables at the Plymouth workhouse in 1862.<sup>3</sup>
- Two workhouse porters sworn as special constables at the workhouse in Islington, London, in 1872.<sup>4</sup>

The practice of appointing special constables in the workhouses was discontinued in London at the direction of the Secretary of State for the Home Department (the Home Secretary) in 1882.

### *Women Special Constables*

Traditionally, only men were eligible to serve as special constables, however there were many instances throughout history where women were sworn in. In August 1875, Rachel Hamilton (pictured above right - © Glasgow Museum), from Partick, Scotland, was sworn in as a special constable during the Partick Riots of that year. It is perhaps owing to her large stature (she was 6ft2, and was known as 'Big Rachel'), that Special Constable Rachel Hamilton was more than capable of standing up to a riotous situation.



The Great War (1914-1918) accelerated the plight of women in policing roles, and there are many national examples where 'able-bodied men' as a prerequisite for recruitment into the special constabulary was relaxed. Still, for a woman to serve in any capacity within a British constabulary in this time placed her in a minority, and such appointments were typically newsworthy:

- During the First World War (1914-1918), two women specials were appointed in Sandgate, Kent, to 'keep a look out for suspicious persons and lights on the beach'.
- Annie Eva Martin was sworn in at Marylebone Police Court on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1917 as a special constable on the Great Western Railway.

The rules around appointing female special constables in the UK were relaxed towards the end of the Second World War, although like the regular police, men outnumbered women in the specials for many more years. The first woman special

<sup>2</sup> 'Special Constables for Dartmouth' Dartmouth & South Hams Chronicle 26 October 1900, p3, col.2

<sup>3</sup> 'Special Constables for the Workhouse' Western Daily Mercury 1 May 1862, p2, col.4

<sup>4</sup> 'The Special Constables' Islington Gazette 20 September 1872, p2, col.3

constable in the southwest was Miss Nancy Douglas Rooth, who was appointed within the Exeter City Police force on 26th June 1944. She was the daughter of Lt. Col. Richard Alexander Rooth, who was killed at Gallipoli during the Great War and was buried on the beach at Cape Helles. Mrs E.M. Jamieson, a civilian clerk at Exmouth Police Station, became the Devon Constabulary's first woman special constable on 16th January 1950. Miss Kathleen Baldwin, from St Austell, was the Cornwall Constabulary's first woman special constable. She was appointed on 20th July 1966 and had already served twelve years as a special constable in Gloucestershire and Somerset.



Nancy Douglas Rooth as a child. She would later go on to be the southwest's first female special constable. (Alex Hallawell Collection)

### ***Specials During the Great War 1914-1918***

The Great War saw the appointment of unprecedented numbers of special constables under the terms of the *Special Constables Act 1914*. The Act removed the need for 'tumult, riot or felony' to

exist in order to appoint special constables en masse and brought them under the control of the local constabularies. Before the war, a Home Office circular instructed police authorities to keep a classified register of suitable persons who could be called upon in the event of a war, and it was from this register that many of the first wartime special constables were recruited.

The special constabulary in wartime was particularly useful in enforcing the many new criminal offences created by the *Defence of the Realm Act*. In Exeter, specials patrolled the railways until such time the railway companies made their own arrangements to protect them from enemy sabotage. They were part of a much larger police auxiliary service that included the First and Second Police Reserves and a contingent of temporary constables appointed to backfill the absences caused by war leavers from the regular Exeter City Police force.

The wartime special constables in both counties were generally older men who wanted to fulfil patriotic inclinations but were ineligible for military service either through infirmity or being aged over the maximum permitted to join the Army. There was no provision of uniform early in the war, and all that identified them was an arm band and a lapel badge. Later in the war however, and particularly in Exeter, specials were issued uniforms adorned with merit stripes denoting the number of years served.



Barnstaple specials in 1914. Their presentation is typical of the era when men were provided with only a baton and a white armband to identify them as officers of the law. (British Newspaper Archive)



*Cornwall Special Constabulary lapel badge.*



*Devon Special Constabulary lapel badge.*



*Exeter Special Constabulary lapel badge.*

### *Specials During the Second World War 1939-1945*

As with the first war, the special constabulary was mobilised in large numbers during the Second World War. Such was the scale of recruitment that in many areas an officer with the rank of commandant was appointed to lead them. Richard Trevithick Gilbertstone Tangye OBE, a veteran of the Great War, was appointed commandant of the Cornwall Special Constabulary, but died suddenly in 1944.

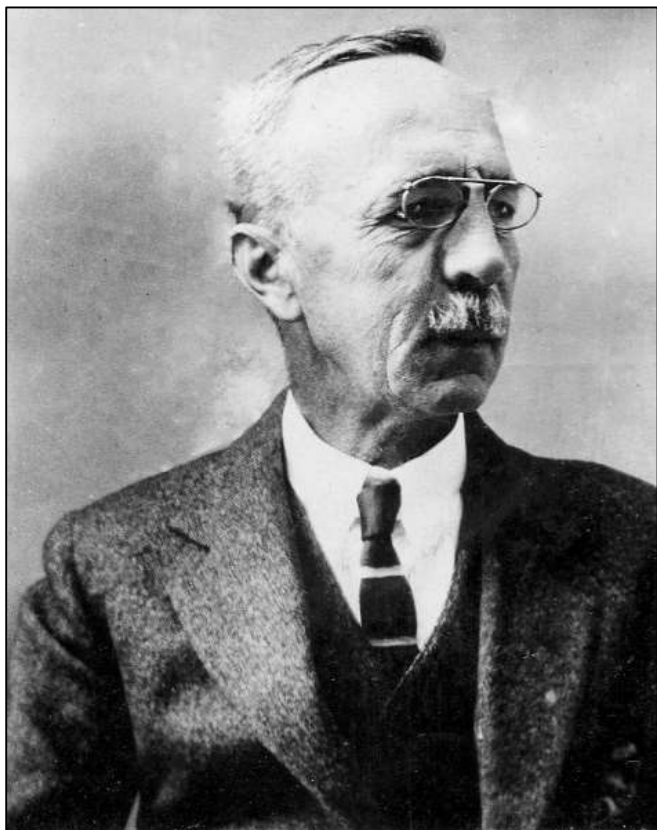


*Special Commandant Richard Trevithick Gilbertstone Tangye OBE. Pictured during his time as Deputy Lieutenant of Cornwall. (Harry Tangye Collection)*

Unlike the situation in the first war, specials were issued with uniform, and a rank structure was introduced in the county forces which created positions such as special sergeant. One such officer, Special Sergeant William Francis Rendell, died along with his teenage son in an air raid in Teignmouth on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1943. Being often on the forefront of the civil defence response, many



other special constables lost their lives. Special Constable Samuel Fisher Copeland Chetham, from Newton Abbot, died alongside Special Constable Frederick George Pearse on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1942. They died from being struck by flying debris when an enemy bomb was dropped on Devon Square.



*Special Constable Samuel Fisher Copeland Chetham. (Air Crew Remembered Collection)*

Other specials who lost their lives during the war were Special Sergeant Sidney John Blackler Hannam (Plymouth), SCs William James Helland Hutchings, Albert Edward Harris, William John Albert Beer, and Sidney James Henry Baker (all from Plymouth), SC Harold Rowland Luxton (Exeter), SC Harry Stanley Whittaker (Dartmouth), SC John Rogers Cartwright DSO (Seaton), SC Alfred Percy Ford (Kingsbridge), SC Ronald Hockin (Teignmouth), and SC Francis Stanley Allin (Plympton).

Some special constables performed highly sensitive work of the type enshrined in the *Official Secrets Act*. Special Constable George Jones, from Lewdown, near Okehampton, was in his ordinary life a delivery driver for a local creamery. By order of Devon's chief constable, Major Morris, Jones

covertly delivered top secret documents to and from police stations for the duration of the war. The documents were concealed in a wooden box beneath the driver's seat of his van and were dropped off at the county's police stations along with the milk deliveries.

From the declaration of war through to VE Day, the special constabulary in Devon was estimated to have performed over six million hours of voluntary duty.



*Queen's Crown Plymouth Special Constabulary cap badge.*

In a time when the police demographic in Britain was largely white, appointments such as Cecil Wilberforce Rodgers, the son of a Jamaican immigrant, were newsworthy. Cecil joined the Plymouth Special Constabulary in 1939 and served a long career in the force until his death in 1966. The life and career of Cecil Wilberforce Rodgers was covered in January's issue of *History Matters* (issue no. 32). He is believed to be the first black man in the UK to have joined the specials and had previously served in the British West Indies Regiment during the Great War.



*Penzance Special Constabulary during the Second World War. The man seated front and centre is Chief Constable R.C.M. Jenkins. The officer in the second row, far right, was the borough undertaker. (Simon Dell Collection)*



*Tavistock specials, photo likely taken in the late 1960s, as many of them are wearing Devon & Exeter Police cap badges. (Simon Dell Collection)*

In 1967, the year Devon & Cornwall Constabulary was formed, the special constabulary in the southwest numbered 2,588 officers. Divisional commandants were appointed in each of the force's fourteen divisions, and each was responsible for the administration of the specials in their respective areas.

In 1979, William James Roy Acton, a former police officer and later a civilian member of the force's personnel department, was appointed chief officer of the special constabulary. He had oversight of the force's divisional commandants and remained in the role until 1995. Acton was succeeded as chief officer of the special constabulary by Max Andrews, who was in turn succeeded by the incomparable 'Buster' Brown, and latterly Marc Kastner-Walmsley.

In the present, the special constabulary remains an important police auxiliary, and over time its members have gained certain statutory rights, such as the expansion of their jurisdiction across the whole of England and Wales (rather than just in the area they were appointed) and membership of the Association of Special Constabulary Officers. In 2020, special constable membership of the Police Federation was announced by the UK government.

There are special constables in all 43 Home Office police forces and the British Transport Police. As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, there were 9,174 special constables serving in the UK.<sup>5</sup>



*Group of Truro specials, c2010. (Photo courtesy of Mick Ginnelly)*

<sup>5</sup> [Special constables | College of Policing](#)

# Remembering PC Norman Edward West and the Crew of JB141 | RAFVR 626 Sqd.



During the Second World War, the rules around police officers joining the military were stricter compared to the previous conflict. Later in the war however, the sheer scale of Allied losses prompted a relaxation of the rules, and there was a call-up for able policemen to fight. **PC Norman Edward West** (pictured, photo courtesy of his son Antony West) was one of a handful of men from Plymouth City Police to join the RAF during this unprecedented call to arms. He was born in Plymouth and attended Sutton High School.

West first joined 103 Squadron based at RAF Abingdon, in Oxfordshire. It is here that he honed his skills as a bomber pilot. His first recorded operational flight took place on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1943; a night raid on Hagen, Germany.<sup>6</sup> He undertook five further bombing raids on Germany whilst attached to 103 Squadron and then transferred to 626 Squadron based at RAF Wickenby, in Lincolnshire.

His first mission with 626 Squadron took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1943, a night raid on Berlin in a Lancaster Bomber III (JB141). West was the Flight Sergeant, which placed him in overall command of six men. It was a perilous flight; considerable icing of the fuselage was experienced, and the aircraft was damaged by flak. Furthermore, one of the bombs failed to release and had to be brought back to base. West noted that the enemy's ground-to-air fire was "...very accurate".<sup>7</sup>

16<sup>th</sup> December 1943; another night raid on Berlin in Lancaster JB774. They lifted at 1643hrs, but West abandoned the flight at 1805hrs when the mid-upper gunner, Sgt JJ Smith, complained of feeling unwell. The flight record indicates that West turned the oxygen supply on when he was first notified of Sgt Smith's condition at 30,000ft, likely in the belief that the problem was caused by oxygen deprivation. As they reached the enemy coast, Smith was no better, and the raid was called off. At 1848hrs, West jettisoned thirty-seven of the craft's payload to save weight, and therefore fuel, for the journey back to England.<sup>8</sup>

His next mission was a dawn raid on Mannheim on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1943 in Lancaster JB748. This time, all crew remained medically well, and all objectives were achieved. The flight record notes that there was "...a large white explosion at 1927hrs" and "...no difficulty encountered".<sup>9</sup> Three days later, an aircraft malfunction scuppered yet another flight for West. The mission, undertaken in JB748, was abandoned around an hour after take-off after the generators were found to be overcharging. West switched to battery power and found it "...impossible to continue (the) mission".<sup>10</sup> On 29<sup>th</sup> December, the generator problem on JB748 had been repaired, and a successful raid was flown over Berlin, with all targets destroyed.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Squadron 103 Record of Events, The National Archives, ref AIR/27/815/20

<sup>7</sup> Squadron 626 Record of Events, The National Archives, ref AIR/27/2145, p7

<sup>8</sup> Squadron 626 Record of Events, The National Archives, ref AIR/27/2145, p9

<sup>9</sup> Squadron 626 Record of Events, The National Archives, ref AIR/27/2145, p12

<sup>10</sup> Squadron 626 Record of Events, The National Archives, ref AIR/27/2145, p16

<sup>11</sup> Squadron 626 Record of Events, The National Archives, ref AIR/27/2145, p19

On 5<sup>th</sup> January 1944, West commanded Lancaster JB399 on a night raid on Stettin, Germany. On the return flight to England, they ran out of oxygen over Denmark and had to drop to a safe level, putting themselves at significant risk from enemy fighter and ground-to-air attack. The following week was spent on 'stand down' and the squadron was subject to training and lectures in aircraft recognition, escape procedures, security, and prisoners of war. Some light relief was had when twenty-two crews were permitted to undertake clay pigeon shooting on base.

West's final flight was on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1944, a night raid on Braunschweig, Germany. He was assigned JB141, a craft he was familiar with. His crew were Sgt A. 'Dinger' Bell (Navigator), Sgt C.F. 'Corney' Wheatstone (Wireless Operator), Sgt J.F. Stanley (Bomb Aimer), Sgt G.R. Powell (Flight Engineer), Sgt J.J. 'Joe' Smith (Mid-Upper Gunner), and Sgt G. 'Baron' Upfold (Rear Gunner). JB141 lifted from RAF Wickenby at 1638 hours as part of a formation of fourteen bombers. No radio messages were received from JB141 after take-off, and wreckage was found the following day near Barssun, south of Bremen. The cause of the crash was never determined. All seven crew were killed. They were buried at Hanover War Cemetery.

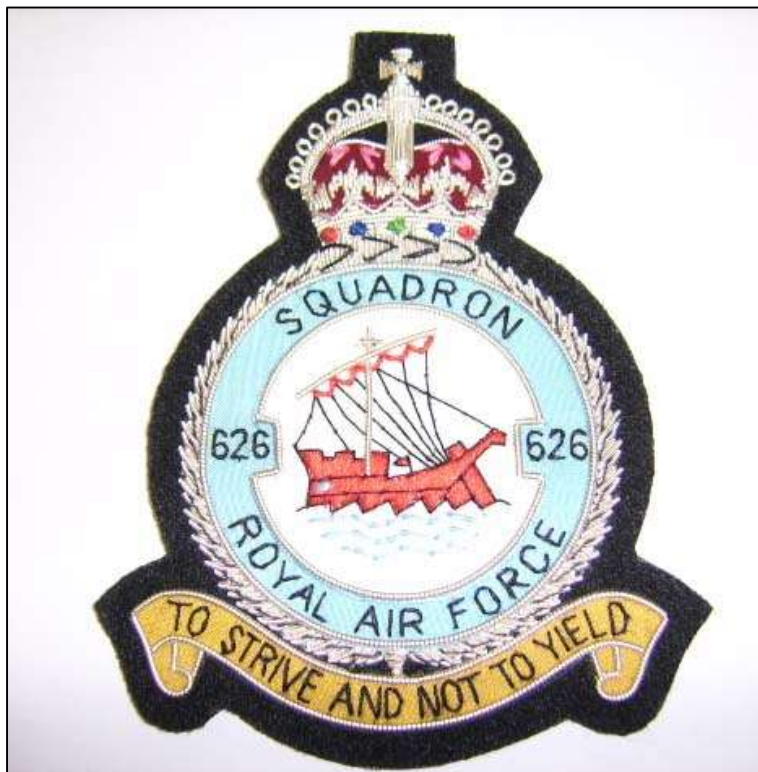
Jean Sweet (1926-2018), a friend to the crew of JB141, was expecting the men to attend a birthday party and wrote a poem about them in anticipation of their attendance. Tragically, they died before that date, however the poem was preserved:

***In Tribute to a Gallant Crew from a Grateful British Subject***

Johnny and Norman, the Baron and Joe, Corney and Dinger and George  
 Are out in a Bomber on every Big Show  
 Their way through the flak they will forge  
 Bei mir bist du shane (sic)  
 Is the Lancaster's name  
 It means what we think - you're the tops  
 Norm will pilot you through  
 John will aim his bombs true  
 Until all this monstrosity stops  
 If they're hit by the flak  
 There is no turning back  
 They'll go on till the job has been done  
 And with all guns ablaze  
 They'll help put out that maze  
 Of searchlights with the Baron's rear gun  
 When wounded and torn  
 Looking slightly forlorn  
 The bomber limps back with its crew  
 George will care for and tend  
 Every fresh battle scar  
 Till once more she can fly in the blue  
 Then with Dinger, Joe, Corney completing the crew  
 The cream of our land is displayed  
 We humble ourselves when we think of the courage  
 And sacrifices you have made  
 Well we're trying to help you by staying at home  
 Looking after the things that you love  
 And we'll still be waiting when you cease to roam  
 In those treacherous skies high above.



The crew of JB141. L-R: George Upfold, John Stanley, Arthur Bell, Norman West, George Powell, Cyril Wheatstone. Kneeling: JJ Smith. (Photo courtesy of Richard Gibson and Tony West)



Squadron 626 logo. The design features a masted ship denoting its heraldry, "On the waves of the sea, an ancient ship, sails furled, charged on the bow with an eye." (Photo courtesy of John from [www.elliottmilitary.com](http://www.elliottmilitary.com))

# Police Gallantry & The Wreck of the SS Alba

Wreck of the SS Alba, 1939. (Postcard Image)



The *SS Alba* was a Panamanian-registered steamship which ran aground on Three Brothers Rocks, St Ives, on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1938 during a storm. Five members of its Hungarian crew perished. Oft overlooked in historical accounts of the incident are the gallant actions of a group of Cornish police officers who risked their lives to save the crews of both the steamship and of the lifeboatmen whose boat capsized during the rescue.

The *SS Alba* was launched in 1920 in the United States and was originally christened *SS Cayuga* after the Haudenosaunee tribe of Native Americans. She was built by the Detroit Shipbuilding Company<sup>12</sup> and was powered by a triple expansion steam engine with a maximum speed of 9 knots (10 mph).<sup>13</sup> She was rechristened to her final namesake in 1937, by which time she was sailing under Panamanian registry.

On 31<sup>st</sup> January 1938, the *Alba* got into difficulty in rough seas off St Ives and the captain, **Joseph Horvath**, decided to seek shelter in port. Driven by a north-westerly gale, Captain Horvath mistook

the lights of Porthmeor for Godrevy Lighthouse and the ship struck Three Brothers Rocks and became stuck.

The local RNLI lifeboat *Caroline Parsons* was launched and successfully evacuated all twenty-three crew members despite the perilous conditions and headed to shore. By this time, the local police were aware of the situation and watched helplessly from Porthmeor Beach as the lifeboat was tossed about. Fears that she too would come to grief were confirmed when the lifeboat capsized and threw everybody overboard.

<sup>12</sup> Lloyd's Register of Steamers and Motorships 1931-1932

<sup>13</sup> Wreck Site website, SS Alba 1938

Without a thought for their own safety, **Sergeant Horace Osborne** and **PCs Leslie Jones, Noel Wilkinson,** and **George Edgar Appleton** repeatedly leapt into the water and pulled as many men to safety as possible. Despite their determination, five of the *Alba's* crew were lost; three of them were brought ashore dead, the bodies of the other two were never recovered.

*"In spite of the waves beating violently on the rocks, the policemen dived repeatedly into the raging seas at the risk of their lives and pulled several sailors ashore."*<sup>14</sup>

The actions of the Cornish police officers on that day did not go unnoticed. In 1939, all four were awarded the King's Police Medal for Gallantry during a ceremony at Buckingham Palace. Sergeant Osborne was also awarded the Gold Cross of Merit, and PCs Appleton and Jones were awarded the Silver Cross of Merit by His Serene Highness the Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary.



*Officers and their medals, Buckingham Palace, 1939. Pictured left to right are Superintendent Matthews, Sergeant Osborne, PC Jones, PC Wilkinson, and PC Appleton. (SWPHCT)*

Sadly, PC Appleton was not able to enjoy the notability of his accolade for very long. On 5<sup>th</sup> December 1939, he passed away at the Royal Cornwall Infirmary, aged 27, after "a brief illness."<sup>15</sup> The official cause of death, according to

his death certificate, was a combination of septicaemia, thrombosis, and cellulitis.<sup>16</sup> It is not known whether his involvement in the *Alba* incident contributed to any one of the conditions from which he died.



*PC George Edgar Appleton, recipient of the Hungarian Silver Cross of Merit. (Ancestry)*

*Historical accounts of the wrecking of the SS Alba differ quite significantly. Some sources state only three men died, whilst others acknowledge that five died yet only name and focus on the three who were subject to a coroner's inquest – **Ernest Stipanovic**, 50, **Gyulya Szabo**, 28, and **George Kovacs**, 26. Indeed, my research for this article has, despite my best efforts, failed to identify the names of the other two. Curiously, a recently erected memorial plaque at Barnoon Cemetery, St Ives, names only Stipanovic and Szabo as victims of the tragedy. Finally, no contemporary accounts I could find seem to acknowledge the actions of the police officers without whose involvement would likely have resulted in far more lives being lost. Hopefully this article goes some way to righting some of these wrongs.*

<sup>14</sup> 'Gallant Police Officer' West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser 7 December 1939, p7

<sup>15</sup> 'Veryan Constable's Death' Cornish Guardian 7 December 1939, p2-3

<sup>16</sup> Death certificate for George Edgar Appleton, GRO



# OffBeat

Christiaan Batelt – The Dutch Police Photographer

**This infrequent series takes in police and crime stories from around the world. This month's article looks at the career of Dutch detective Christiaan Batelt, the man who introduced the Amsterdam Police force to the advent of photography. My thanks to Nick van der Borg from the Politie Amsterdam for the source material.**



Christiaan Batelt.

**Christiaan Batelt**, the son of a Dutch pharmacist, joined the Amsterdam police force as a volunteer in 1872. Fascinated by police work as a child, he longed for a career in the Dutch constabulary despite his father's protestations and insistence that he should carry on the family pharmacy business. Indeed, out of respect for his father's feelings, he did not venture into police work until after his father had passed away.

Amsterdam at the time was a dangerous place. The population was dense, and poor sanitation meant that many citizens disposed of their excreta in barrels which were periodically dragged to the riverside and tipped into the water. Pestilence was rampant, and violence and disputes were common between residents and foreign sailors who frequented the many inns and dance halls. Simply, to police the historic city was a job for the brave and, perhaps, the stupid. A 19<sup>th</sup> century Dutch policeman's pay was poor compared to other occupations, and resignation rates were high. They only worked during the daytime and come sunset they passed the baton to largely unenthusiastic nightwatchmen. Low

standards of recruitment meant that certain unsavoury characters often entered the ranks, and corruption was rife in this most unglamorous of occupations.

It was not until 1878, following several tumultuous riots, that the force was reformed and police cover was extended to 24 hours. By this time, Batelt was serving in the rank of senior inspector, and was on the constabulary payroll. In 1883, he was promoted to chief inspector and was by default in charge of the Politie Amsterdam's 'Department III' – the equivalent of the British C.I.D. Inspired by what he saw going on in France, Batelt convinced his superiors to invest in the latest photographic equipment so that he could experiment and coach himself in the ways of photography. The Politie Amsterdam had routinely photographed arrestees since 1880, however the prints (known as 'visiting card portraits') were obtained only by the actions of the arresting officer marching their prisoner into the nearest photographer's studio.

Batelt viewed photography as a "powerful expedient" and became an apprentice to career photographer **Johannes Adrianus Jacobus Huijsen**, from whom he learned the trade. The arrangement required that Huijsen enrol as a police officer in order to protect him in the execution of duty (and also to ensure the money kept coming in whether or not he was required to take any photographs that month!) When they weren't photographing arrestees, Batelt and Huijsen experimented with photographic setups, lighting, and techniques. A studio was built in the attic at police headquarters, and a darkroom was established beneath a stairwell, although this was useless for field photography as they were working with wet plates which required developing as soon as possible to ensure a good result. In his memoirs, Batelt

wrote that he was once called out to photograph a corpse in a morgue. There being no darkroom in the building, he resorted to developing the photograph in the back of a blacked out hackney carriage by candlelight. The problem was remedied in later years with the establishment of a studio and darkroom in houses at the Eastern and Western Cemeteries in Amsterdam for the sole purpose of mortuary photography. Mr Huijsen resigned from the police after about a year and Batelt sought a new mentor, however after some years, Batelt was so proficient that he no longer needed assistance, and went solo.

In 1896, Frenchman **Alphonse Bertillon** revolutionised criminal record keeping with his so-called 'Bertillon System' which recorded anthropometric data such as the size, type, and position of a suspect's eyes, ears, nose, as well as the taking of fingerprints in ink. The system devised by Bertillon was gradually adopted across the continent, and men like Christiaan Batelt incorporated this new science into their own work. It was around this time that photography of crime scenes by the Dutch police was brought in as a matter of policy by Police Commissioner Franken, who required that, "...photographs are taken of persons, dead bodies, rooms, and anything that can be considered of importance in relation to the

crime." Franken was explicit in his desire that crime scenes were undisturbed by officers prior to the arrival of the police photographer. A further directive was issued which required the photographing of unidentified dead bodies to aid in identification and the tracing of next of kin.

In 1897, Batelt invited a Dutch journalist into his studio at police headquarters and explained his setup and procedures. Batelt was asked how he dealt with un-co-operative clients who refused to sit still to be photographed. He explained that, unsurprisingly, many people were not happy with being photographed after they were arrested, and it was common for them to deliberately fidget, blink, and otherwise do their best to disrupt proceedings. "Trickery" was the best policy in these circumstances, he explained, and Batelt installed a tall mirror in the room which the suspect was faced with as soon as they entered. Batelt found that, in most cases, the suspect was surprised to see their own reflection upon entering the room, and almost always paused. Batelt, who would hide behind the door, would take a photograph of the suspect's reflection during these precious seconds.



*Batelt c1896, demonstrating how to photograph a dead body.*

Batelt was, of course, a fully sworn police officer, and undertook all manner of work in the detection of crime. A notable investigation was the hunt for the so-called 'Calf Picker' who had stabbed a woman with a sharp object in Amsterdam. Batelt dressed up as a woman and acted as bait in hope of drawing out the suspect. He later did work overseas for the Shah of Persia and performed regular undercover work in plain clothes at important events. In 1904, Batelt, acting on orders from the attorney general, instructed his men to shadow members of the International Socialist Congress at the Gebow, Amsterdam. One of them posed as a photographer and obtained images of attendees for intelligence purposes. Batelt retired in 1910. He held the Knight's Cross of the Order of Orange Nassau and the Prussian Order of the Crown. He died in 1919, aged 55.

# GPO Investigations

By Peter Hinchliffe

With the Post Office scandal of the wrongly convicted Postmasters, currently hearing evidence, it occurs to me that I expect very few of today's policemen know that until sometime late 1960s, the Metropolitan Police were responsible for all matters of crime within the General Post Office.

There was a Metropolitan Detective Sergeant called (Les?) SEALEY permanently stationed in Exeter, I think he had an office in Victoria Park Road, where the GPO Telephones main place was. This long grey building (now flats) was the HQ of GPO Telephones (see below image © Google)



I had a job with him in 65/66 when we arrested a Postman for stealing mail. I recall that at some stage before about 1970 they re-organised GPO investigations and SEALEY became a civilian about the time he was due for pension. He continued to be “the man” we dealt with, until he finally retired in about 1978.

I was involved in “Operation Arrow” and with my wife owned a shop with a flat in Topsham. On the operation we had involvement with GPO Investigations, then they were responsible for telephones and wireless in all its forms. They had a big set up at Euston Tower. We had to deal with them centrally because SEALEY had not been replaced at the time. The GPO then introduced a system of sending a man on six-month secondment to cover the area that SEALEY had vacated. Through the contacts made at Euston Tower, my wife came to an arrangement with the GPO with regard to our flat, they used it for several years. It was probably the privatisation of BT that ended the arrangement.

I do not know what the current arrangements the CID have for matters involving the Post Office but there must be some. I do not know how big an area SEALEY covered or whether the Met had another man in Plymouth at that time.

# 'Bullseye' Oil Lanterns

Dirty, impractical, and downright dangerous!



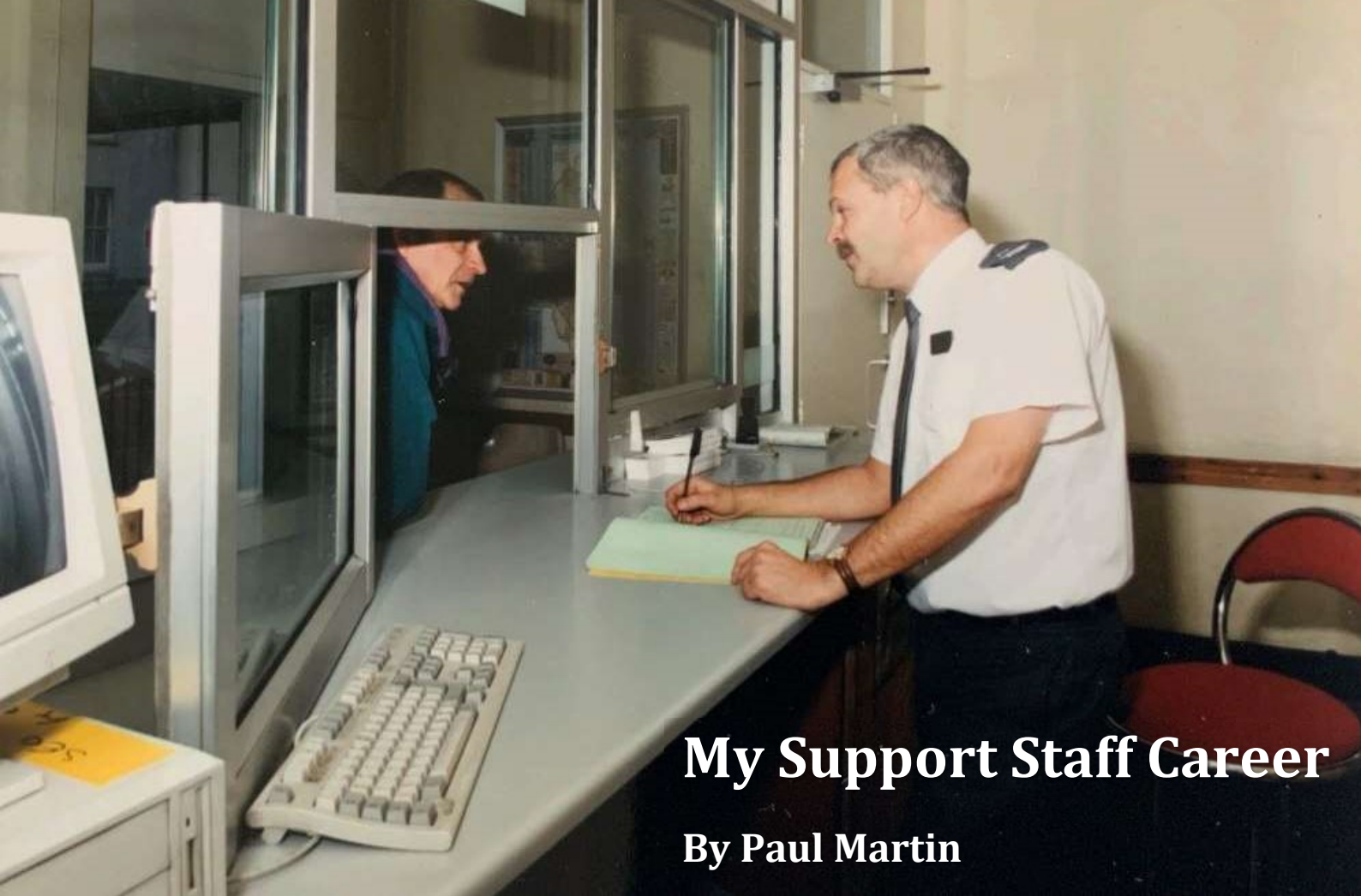
An important part of a 19<sup>th</sup> century British bobby's kit was the 'bullseye' oil lantern. Attached to the belt or sometimes carried by hand, it was a vital means for the Victorian constable to be able to see in the dark on night shifts. Having recently had the opportunity to handle, and light, one of them, I quickly learned how impractical, and dangerous, these things can be!

The device operates like a conventional oil lamp and works by lighting an absorbent fabric wick atop a small oil reservoir which sits inside the metal housing. When lit, the light is magnified thanks to the thick glass lens and provides a respectable amount of illumination. Should the user need to temporarily conceal the light source without extinguishing the flame, say if one wished to wait covertly in ambush for a felon at large, then one can do so by rotating the conical chimney at the top. This turns an interior metal cylinder which blocks the lens completely but keeps the flame burning.

My first observation when handling a lit bullseye lamp was the alarming amount of thick black smoke which rose up through the vents at the top. I used modern 'Bird Brand' clear lamp oil which its website states is, "Linear n-paraffin" and claims to be "highly refined, ultra-pure, and low odour." These positive selling points are offset by the stern warnings on the bottle about how injurious this stuff is to health! The Victorians would have used either whale oil or kerosene. The smoke seemed to reduce a bit when I trimmed the wick (high wicks produce more smoke and soot in most oil lamps anyway) but this naturally led to a duller flame. The lamp has no wick adjuster, so I am not sure how this problem was managed by the police at the time.

Another observation was how hot the entire thing quickly became! Rotating the chimney to conceal the flame was very difficult without gloves, as the metal was extremely hot to the touch. The flame could be extinguished completely by opening the door and blowing it out, but even this was difficult due to the heat, which compelled me to place the lamp on a flat surface before attempting this. I then encountered a new problem! As if the hot clasp of the door wasn't hard enough to open without gloves, the lamp door is very heavy thanks to the presence of the glass lens, and when opened completely causes the entire lamp to topple over. One can only imagine how fraught things became when the Victorian constable got into a scrap with one of these things attached to their belts!

Anyway, those are my rather amateur observations of a piece of obsolete police kit. I'm sure there was a knack to using one of these without harming oneself. Thank goodness for the invention of the battery powered torch!



# My Support Staff Career

By Paul Martin

I joined Devon and Cornwall Constabulary on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 1989. I started at Torquay in the front office, a role that was then known as an 'Enquiry Clerk!'

I had worked in the motor trade since leaving school and in 1982 I was working for Reed of Torbay as a fully skilled panel beater. I was employed on a bonus scheme and could easily earn two weeks' pay in a week. I was allowed four hours to fit a front wing on a Ford Sierra in 1983; I could do it in two so I made two hours' bonus. This helped me pay my mortgage, without the bonus scheme the pay was dreadful. As time went by, cuts were made and just before leaving in 1989, two hours were allowed for a Sierra wing and other times were also reduced. Time to think about something else, or I can't pay the mortgage!

I saw the Enquiry Office job advertised in the local paper. It sounded a little scary to say the least:

*"You will be expected to cover a 24-hour rotating shift pattern covering early, late, and night shift working including weekends and*

*bank holidays. You will be dealing with members of the public over the telephone and at the front counter and carrying out various administration duties."*

I applied in May 1989, sending my application off to the Divisional Administration Officer at Paignton Police Station and then some six weeks or so later received a reply inviting me to an interview at Torquay Police Station. I fell over, I never expected that and was now worried about the role and indeed my capabilities! Undaunted, I felt I had nothing to lose and replied stating I would attend Torquay for 11.30 on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1989.

So, the day arrived, and I made my own way down to the station. I waited nervously in the public enquiry area, which was busy to say the least. It had moved from where I last remembered it; previously, I had walked under the archway, up some steps, and into an office on the right to produce my documents!

A short while later, I was called and led up to the first floor and told to wait until called again. A traffic light type system was operating

outside the door marked 'Superintendent' with lights showing 'wait', 'engaged', and 'enter', and I was invited in to be met by the Divisional Administration Officer, Mr Norman Edgecombe, and introduced to Superintendent Westlake. I sat down and it was explained to me that they were looking for five persons to fill these positions and that each person would be attached to a party and work with that party and follow their shift pattern. They went on to explain the office was staffed at the moment between eight in the morning until midnight with civilian staff and that between midnight and eight in the morning, PCs were used.

I must have been there for about twenty minutes, and on leaving I was shown around the Enquiry Office staff area. It appeared manic, phones ringing constantly, a printer churning out reams of paper, a police radio blaring in the background, uniformed officers coming and going, and a queue of people waiting to be seen out in the public area!

I walked out onto South Street on a bright summer's day. I mulled the last hour or so over and over in my head and thought, do I really want to be shut in that office all day and could I cope with what I had seen in there? Well, yes, I'll give it a try if successful, I won't be in there all day, I'll finish at 2pm on earlies, I'll have the mornings before lates at 2pm, and at least half a day on nights, that was my reasoning! Sadly, it was not to be. I received a letter around a week later stating I had been unsuccessful. I wasn't sure if I was disappointed or not. Back to Reed of Torbay then!

A couple of weeks or so later, a brown windowed envelope dropped through the letterbox at home. You could always tell it was from the force before you opened it; it was franked, and you could see 'Your ref' and 'My ref' above the address in the window!

"What now?" I thought. Well, it was from the DAO at Paignton asking if I was still

interested in the position, as one of the successful applicants had dropped out, and could I let him know soonest!

Talked it over again with the wife. The pay was good, 20% shift allowance and an enhancement of time and a half on Saturdays, with double time payable on Sundays and bank holidays. I decided to reply that I was still interested and sent the positive reply back in the enclosed pre-paid franked envelope!

Week later, another brown envelope is on the mat when I get home. This time, it's an A4-size and quite weighty. It's a contract and a start date!

*"Please report to the duty sergeant at 0900 on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> of August 1989 in smart casual clothes. Please sign and date the enclosed contract of employment keeping the copy for your information and returning the original. We look forward to seeing you."*

Good grief, I had better hand my notice in at Reed of Torbay when I go in tomorrow! So, the day came, I arrived at 0900 wearing a shirt and tie and was met by one of the civilian staff in the office who was dressed the same. Phew, glad I got that bit right. I was given a mass of paperwork including lots of info on UNISON and a pen, (an) Official Secrets Act form, and something about (the) Devon County Council Superannuation scheme. Some 31 years later, how glad I was that I filled that in and sent it back not realising at the time what it was or what it would be worth!

So, the next four days of nine to fives were an eye-opener for sure. I was chaperoned by one of the existing 16-hour staff and introduced to the working practices of the office. The main role was the public counter followed by answering the phone, filling logs, clearing the printer, message switch system, sorting post, and incoming and outgoing internal mail.

I was told now I had four rest days (boy did I need them!) and to return at 0600 on

Wednesday for three early turns with what was to be the officers that I would always work alongside – ‘D’ Party.

So, where did the four days off go? I’m up at 0445 and out the door for 0530 and in the office by 0545 to relieve the night shift. Was I please to see a PC off the early shift in there who had stayed with me until the 16-hour staff arrived! The room just off to the right of the office was the parade room and it was there officers would brief at the start of each shift, so I was close to help if I needed it as generally there would be somebody in there writing something up.

Nine o’clock came and I was invited up to the canteen where breakfast was being served. I sat down with Sergeants Tony Ivey and Martin Warren and most of the rest of the shift. A short while later, Inspector David Roth joined us. He witnessed Sgt Ivey welcoming me to the section by placing a hot teaspoon on the back of my hand. Why did that hurt so much? It turned out he was well known for it, and I witnessed it several times in the next few years, especially when new PCs joined the section!

Back to the office, and there was queue at the counter and a pile of post had arrived. I spent most of the shift on the counter while the rest of the staff were kept busy on the message switch system and answering the phone which rang again as soon as you put it down! The contact number then was 22293 (later 214491) if ringing from Torquay and all calls were handled initially by a switchboard operator located on the first floor in one of the old single quarters. Calls were then filtered but generally put through to the front office! The switchboard was staffed between 0800 and midnight. After that, anyone ringing Torquay police would be automatically transferred to the front office. So, it’s looking like on nights I’ll be answering the phone if anyone rings the

police! Calls were made from a telephone kiosk, private or business address; there weren’t many mobiles!

Paignton had a control room and dealt with ‘999’ calls. Seems strange now, but a call taken at Torquay switchboard that required attendance would be transferred to Torquay front office and then rung through to Paignton by the office staff. In turn, a FALCON<sup>17</sup> log would be created in the control room and a unit dispatched.

The result of this call when finalised would be sent to Torquay by message switch, printed off, and filed in a folder as a record of calls/logs for that day. The duty Inspector would review this record at the end of the shift. The paper printed record of calls for the whole day would then need to be in the Superintendent’s office for review by 0600 the next day.

So, a typical shift on the counter I was to find was made up mainly of people producing documents (HO/RT2 for filling), lost and found property (Register ‘A’ and ‘B’), recording of accidents (Form 72e), and crime recording in a book!

A stray dog register was also maintained in the office. Persons frequently brought dogs in they had found on the street or sometimes even untied them from outside shops in the town! We would keep them in kennels at the rear of the station for an hour or so when they would usually be claimed. If not, they would go to the kennels at Foredown in Kingskerswell to prevent the many complaints we would get from nearby residents if they were left barking, particularly at night.

Dead cats were another favourite. I got into a lot of trouble once for disposing of one in the massive bin at the rear station. The owner turned up having spoken with the finder and asked for it back the next day.

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<sup>17</sup> FALCON was Devon & Cornwall Constabulary’s first computerised command and control system. It was launched in 1988.

Unfortunately, the bin had been emptied earlier that morning! Herring gulls by the dozen in the summer with broken wings and other injuries along with pet rabbits and tortoises were all part of the day's work.

Tie on labels were another part of the role. Probationers were tasked with a certain amount of process in those days and a favourite spot to get some was outside Stead & Simpson's shoe shop in Fleet Street where there was a pedestrian crossing. The approaches were marked in steel square studs fixed in the road, similar to the white zigzag lines of today. The double yellow lines would end at the studs and there were no markings either side of the crossing and motorists were caught out by this thinking they could park! The tie-on label was affixed to the vehicle as the driver could not be identified at the time and they were asked to report to their nearest police station with documents. This offence could not be dealt with via fixed penalty as it was endorsable.

I had to keep an eye on the office area all the time, not only for the public but also a constant stream of solicitors and staff who needed access to the station, which was granted by the push of a button, three of which were located in spots within the office.

I arrived 0545 on the Friday for the last early turn, relieved the night shift, and realised I was on my own until 0800. The sun was streaming down East Street into the office. It was the start of a lovely summer's day outside, the station was alive with staff, Dave the cleaner was busy, the smell of cooked breakfasts told me the canteen staff were in preparing prisoners' breakfasts, the Coroner's Officer had arrived to collect the Form 95s from the previous day, and the postman had dropped a pile of mail.

I sat down only to realise there was somebody standing in the public area. Oh no, I thought, I'm on my own! Phew, needn't have worried, it was just a member of staff! \* o'clock

came and the 16-hour staff arrived along with a spare shift from the 24-hour cover. Crikey, four of us, should be an easy day!

I took advantage of this to familiarise myself with the message switch system. There were several items in the basket located above the terminal for transmission: Request for Convictions, Operational Information, and some crime complaints. I sat down and with some assistance from one of the staff had a go at the request for precon. QB, QC, FT were the destinations to be typed in along with details of the person who was in custody.

I struggled with this initially as I swore some letters of the alphabet were missing from the keyboard! Half an hour later I got there, and, within minutes, reams of paper were being printed from the new Oki Microline printer with all the details of the detained persons convictions!

Looking back now it was a system very similar to email today, ahead of its time in some respects as long as you had an Almanac, anything could be sent to any force or station in the whole country including Interpol. I passed on the Operational Information, it described an incident in Torquay overnight and was at least four A4 pages worth!

Weekend off now and nights on Monday, seven of them! It was a five-week scheme, seven nights (2200 to 0600) three days off, four lates (1400 to 2200) two days off, three earlies (0600 to 1400) two days off, three lates (1400 to 2200) two days off, four earlies (0600 to 1400) followed by three spares which could be any of the above, and then two days off before going back to nights.

Monday night and I'm in for 2200 with a packed lunch. Well, here we go, first time I've been up all night. Midnight came, and the 16-hour cover went home. It wasn't that busy in the early part of the week. Most of my time was taken up with typing crime complaints. I was amazed there were at least 10 thefts from



vehicles in the basket mostly from the Temperance Street and Lymington Road car parks during the day. These took me an age to type up.

Friday and Saturday was a little different. Live music was blaring from The Pelican pub just across the road, and the whole area was alive with people moving between the many pubs in Torre, ten at least in a square mile.

Midnight came, and everything stopped. Pubs had shut at 2300 and the Pelican at 0100, everyone was now out on the street! The public area began filling up, mostly by people protesting the innocence of friends that had been locked up and appropriate adults waiting to have access to Juveniles.

I was glad of the screen that ran the full length of the counter! As the night rolled on the constant banging and kicking of cell doors could be heard coming from custody along with screaming and shouting. It all seemed a bit scary at first, but I soon got used to it! I was amazed how many people would wait for hours and even sleep in the public area waiting for friends or relatives to be released from custody, who of course had done nothing wrong!

'D' party staff would frequent the office with various requests throughout the night including message switch requests to other forces to progress enquiries and crime complaints for transmission and tea/coffee and a chat. Soon it was Sunday, last one, I was starting to feel it now having been up most days by 2pm, but they did seem to fly by. I soon realised I was to spend much of my first day off asleep. I tried to stay up but could never manage it!

The weeks rolled by and to be perfectly honest, I was struggling a bit with it all. The typing was a nightmare. It wasn't uncommon on nights to type up two or three burglaries submitted by CID and some of them would have three or four pages of items including

jewellery which all had to be itemised. The phone would be constantly ringing and people coming into the office during the night, usually in a drunken state. To top it off there were plans to move the Parade Room along with all operational staff to the other side of the building into the CID office and move CID upstairs.

The old parade room would become a property store and I would be alienated from my party. It had also been mentioned that the screens should come down as it was felt they were oppressive to members of the public! It also hit home when I looked at the Xmas duties and saw I was early turn Xmas Day and Boxing Day and late turn on New Year's Eve! I persevered, but did think about packing it in and if it hadn't been for the support I received from the two sergeants and the rest of the team, I probably would have.

So, into the nineties we go and the age of Information Technology. I was to be trained in the use of a computer, and two massive visual display screens were installed on the office desks and one on the public counter, CIS (Crime Information system) shortly to be followed by OIS (Operational Information System).

I was to attend HQ for a two-week training course on the use of the system that was to be installed by McDonald Douglas Information Systems.

CIS arrived and we all had the delights of listening to Vivaldi for what seemed like hours whilst ringing in crime complaints to CDIB, (Central Data Input Bureau). No more message switching crime! No longer would I be ringing Paignton control room with my operator number of 8691, quoting that and a monthly code word to get a member of staff there to do a PNC check on a person or vehicle for me. I'll be able to do it myself on OIS!



The staff office area. (© Paul Martin)

I watched the seasons change from the office window and in particular the massive lamp post that was always swaying in the wind on the island outside during the winter storms. How it kept standing I'll never know, but it did. In my time however I did see it demolished on several occasions, once by a fire appliance and quite a few times by vehicles jumping the red traffic lights at the junction including a police vehicle! Arriving at the same time as computers, which I grew with and adapted to quite quickly was an intercom system for the station. Several rooms and corridors were fitted with speakers and a microphone base station in the office. One member of staff seemed to be very keen on using it, so much so she acquired the name of 'Bing Bong Bailey'. Around about the same time it was decided we were to be issued with a uniform. Some of the earlier staff already had blazers with the force crest on the pocket but otherwise it was just a shirt and tie. This was to be different, grey trousers, white long and short sleeved shirts, and grey epaulettes with the words 'Support Staff' stitched in white. If you were lucky, you might have got a NATO style grey jumper with an embroidered force crest! I also had a new title, 'Station Enquiry Officer' (SEO), and a number 50554. Didn't last long though, all the grey was soon to be replaced with black, along with 'Police Staff' stitched in white on black epaulettes with your number and a black fleece jacket.



Me and some colleagues in the early years. (© Paul Martin)



The front counter and the one-way mirror! That enabled us to see who was out there. The bulb would last about a week! (© Paul Martin)



Various police staff insignia. (© Paul Martin)

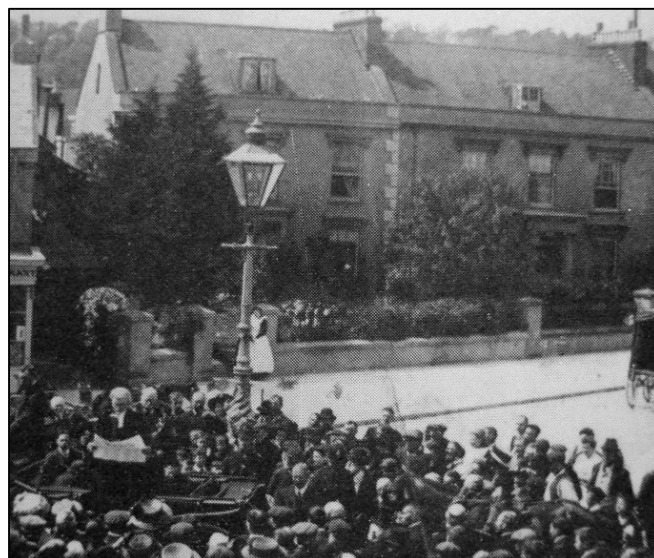


The full complement, 1998. (© Paul Martin)

I was to witness some quite frightening events during the next 14 years. I met some good people from within, some of whom I am still in contact with today, and some not so nice people on the other side of the counter. I was spat at and threatened, had the seating in the office area lifted from its floor mountings by a male and then thrown at the counter screens which smashed, and I took a 10" knife off a male threatening to stab people in the front office. Didn't quite seem to fit the job description on looking back!

On nights the phone would still continue to ring constantly until the new control room at Exeter was finished that would spell the end of an era for 'Foxtrot Victor', soon to become 'Echo Victor'. The office opening hours changed as it was thought that now the calls would be answered centrally at Exeter for the whole of Devon there was no need to keep the front office at Torquay open all night, and it was soon to close at 2am, opening again at 7am.

1999 came, and we were moved into the end terrace of the row of Georgian style houses known as Beenland Gardens to the right of the station, whilst the station was revamped and modernised, along with a new custody suite doubling the number cells and a new front office situated in the archway.



Old photo of the facilities on Beenland Gardens, used as a temporary base of operations in 1999. (Image courtesy of Paul Martin)



Beenland Gardens, 1999. (© Paul Martin)

Vehicle access would now be from the end of East Street into and through an area to the rear of the station once known as Thomas's Yard which had been used for the storage of seized vehicles. All uniformed staff and vehicles along with CID were moved to Paignton a while before the demolition took place. The old cell block at Paignton was converted into locker/shower space and the ground floor room behind the enquiry office became the parade room. All Torbay patrol staff would start and finish from there. Whilst operating from what was known as Beenland Gardens I witnessed the Total Eclipse of the sun and the office remained open all night on

the 31st of December 1999 in case the millennium bug materialised!

2001 came, and it's time to move back into the new station. The top floor that once contained the married quarters flats had gone. Second floor single men's quarters had all been knocked into one and become a major incident room. RBO's room and admin offices along with a canteen and night kitchen area occupy the first floor, the hall, bar area and snooker room had all gone, and everything on this side had become a new custody and ID suite and more cells apart from the front office public area which was now situated in the archway with a staff area off to the right and a locker room where the old enquiry office was.

Where are the officers going, doesn't seem to be much space? There wasn't, it had not been planned to bring them back and it took a few years before they finally did, only to find it was all too small ... and still is! Good news that the public office area had a glass screen although there were gaps in it. This was a 'vetting' area where you could make a decision whether to let the visitor into an inner area where there was seating and a wide-open anti climb counter to speak and take details, or to deal with them at the screen. It worked quite well, and you could now speak in private without anyone waiting hearing your

conversation. You still had to be aware of persons wanting access to the station and operating the external door to let them in. The same layout is still in place now some 22 years later although the staff office area has been enlarged into one of the old locker rooms.

Further changes were planned as we moved on into the 2000's. Gradually, the opening hours are again cut back, first to close at midnight and later 10pm and now I believe the office is only staffed Monday to Saturday 0800 to 1800 and closed on Sundays. I moved on internally in 2006.

Looking back over the last 31 years, I really enjoyed working for Devon and Cornwall Police. I was able to support a lifestyle that I could only have dreamt of if I had stayed in the motor trade, and where is Reed of Torbay now? Yes, its long gone, shortly after I did, replaced by a car park for Curry's.

I retired completely in October 2020, and did I miss it at first? Yes, I did dreadfully. The camaraderie and friendships most, along with the laughs, yes, I had a lot of laughs along the way and met some great characters, some of whom have unfortunately passed on and some I am still in touch with. I witnessed and was involved in some changing and sometimes very challenging times.



An architect's drawing of Torquay Police Station. Prior to the construction of the new facility, the police operated from Market Street. The upper floors are the married quarters flats which were removed during the 1999 refit. (Image courtesy of Paul Martin)



The row of terraced houses and a shop on South Street which were demolished to make way for the new police station. (Image courtesy of Paul Martin)



Torquay Police Station under construction. Building was paused during the Second World War. (Image courtesy of Paul Martin)



Torquay nick during the 1999 refurbishment which saw the demolition of the top floor and a significant reduction in office space. (© Paul Martin)



The new look Torquay Police Station in 2001. (Image courtesy of Paul Martin)

# CORNWALL POLICE MEMORIAL

On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022, a memorial plaque to Cornwall's fallen police officers was unveiled at Bodmin Police Station. It was a pleasant Spring morning with not a cloud in the sky. The service was officiated by the **Lord Lieutenant, Col. Edward Bolitho OBE**, and **Reverend Sheila Bawden**. Guests and dignitaries were welcomed by **Inspector Regie Butler-Card** and the service was concluded by **Chief Superintendent Jim Pearce**. **Chief Constable Shaun Sawyer QPM** and **Police & Crime Commissioner Alison Hernandez** had the honour of formally unveiling the plaque. Amongst those present were the **High Sheriff of Cornwall (Mark Thomas)**, representatives of the Cornwall branch of NARPO, the Police Federation, the Kreslu Police Charity, and friends and family members of the officers and staff commemorated.

The Lord Lieutenant in his speech thanked the work of the police service in Cornwall and spoke of the sometimes extreme hostility and violence officers and staff face as they go about their duties. After the ceremony, there was significant interest from guests and dignitaries as to how the 41 officers and staff commemorated on the memorial plaque lost their lives. This article provides examples overleaf of some of the fallen named on the plaque, some of which have never previously appeared on any police memorial.



*The new memorial plaque at Bodmin Police Station. (© Regie Butler-Card)*

**Parish Constable Samuel JORY – Died 5<sup>th</sup> April 1814.** *A parish constable in the borough of Launceston, Jory was shot in the chest whilst assisting court bailiffs in levying distress on rent at a property in Higher Bamham.*

**Police Constable John Edmund AVERY – Died 24<sup>th</sup> August 1842.** *Avery, who was on loan to the Parish of Wadebridge from Plymouth Borough Police, fell into the River Camel and drowned whilst trying to arrest Edward Brown, who also died in the scuffle, for stealing crops from a riverside farm.*

**Superintendent Edward MARSHALL – Died 10<sup>th</sup> January 1883.** *Superintendent Marshall was killed when his cart ran up a bank, overturned, and crushed him to death whilst travelling from Truro to Newquay. An inquest heard that the superintendent had had concerns about the temperament of his horse but was hesitant to trouble the chief constable about the problem.*

**Police Constable John Henry THOMAS – Died 29<sup>th</sup> September 1921.** *PC Thomas, from the Cornwall Constabulary, joined the DCLI in 1914 at Bodmin and rejoined the force after hostilities concluded. He contracted tuberculosis whilst in the Army and suffered for many years until he was no longer able to perform his duties as a policeman. He succumbed to the disease at the age of 31.*

**War Reserve Constable John BALMENT – Died 21<sup>st</sup> March 1941.** *A veteran of the Great War and retired policeman from the Truro City Police force, Balment attested in the war reserve constabulary at the beginning of hostilities. He was killed in an air raid along with his wife and son in Plymouth.*

**Police Constable Thomas COLLINS – Died 24<sup>th</sup> August 1943.** *Whilst in service with '100' Squadron of the RAFVR during the Second World War, Collins and six colleagues died when their plane was shot down over Denmark and crashed into the Baltic Sea. His body was never recovered.*

**PCs Joseph James CHILDS & Martin Ross REID – Died 13<sup>th</sup> December 1978.** *PCs Childs and Reid drowned when their patrol car was swept into Porthleven Harbour during a storm.*

**Police Constable Gail CROCKER – Died 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013.** *Died by suicide. PC Crocker joined the force in 2003, originally as a Police Community Support Officer. She became a constable in 2007 and was based in Bodmin.*

**Police Constable Andrew Hocking – Died 8<sup>th</sup> March 2015.** *PC Hocking died from natural causes whilst off duty. He was known for his sunny disposition and was well-respected in Falmouth, where he served as the neighbourhood beat manager.*

Other named on the plaque are Joseph Burnett, William Goad, Henry Edwards, William Henry Lobb, John Newcombe, William Warne Rowe, Charles Leonard Webb, Henry Nancarrow, Walter Gray, William John Solomon, Frederick John Bray, Samuel Tom, Samuel Charles Rowe, Herbert John Luke, Edward Hamilton Lindesay, Stephen Cortis, Alfred William Wherry, Cecil Frederick Menear, Austin Kinver Ware, William 'Bill' George Laws, John Borlase, Frederick Gordon Ivor Fox, Trevor Michael Thomas Pollard, Andrew John Henwood, Jonathan Arthur Furse, Kevin Derek Sparks, Kimberley James, Rebecca Golding, and Nigel Guard.

Information provided at the eleventh hour by NARPO and other individuals revealed names that were hitherto unknown and will be commemorated on a second plaque in the near future.



# MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

The **Police Memorabilia Collectors Club (PMCC)** recently posed this question for thought: “Did police forces really have night plates?”

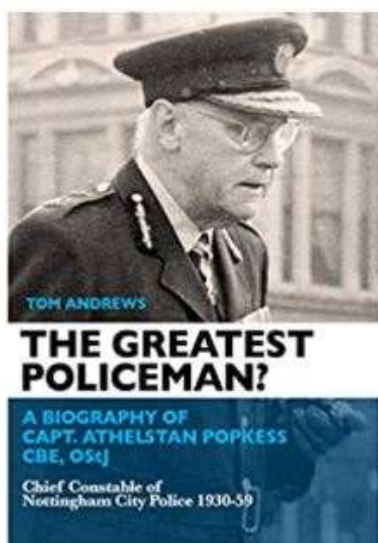


## TECALEMIT SECURITY POLICE

Thank you to everybody who responded to my appeal about the **Tecalemit Security Police** in February’s issue. Although the mystery has not yet been fully solved, the appeal has resulted in some excellent information being revealed, and some valid lines of enquiry to explore. I have since heard from the HR officer at Tecalemit Garage Equipment Ltd., who regrettably informed me that their records do not go back as far as the 1940s. Look out for an article on this subject in a future issue of History Matters.

**APPEAL:** The **British Transport Police History Group (BTPHG)** is keen to complete its collection of *Police Review* magazine. If you have any laying around which you no longer need, please consider contacting [chair@btphg.org.uk](mailto:chair@btphg.org.uk)

## Book Recommendation



Historian **Tom Andrews**, who is currently the editor of the Police History Society magazine and annual, has produced this excellent account of the life and career of **Chief Constable Athelstan Popkess CBE OStJ**, who led Nottingham City Police from 1930-1959. Popkess, who passed away in Torquay in 1967, is credited with the introduction of police wireless communications, enhanced police use of forensics, and burglar alarms.

The author makes a strong case for Popkess’ candidacy for Britain’s greatest police officer through careful study of first-hand accounts and thorough research. Quite remarkable is the fact that, despite Popkess’ achievements, very few have ever heard of him.

Tom’s book is currently available in hardcover and paperback on Amazon: [The Greatest Policeman?: A Biography of Capt Athelstan Popkess: Amazon.co.uk: Andrews, Tom: 9781914277115: Books](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/9781914277115)